

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
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FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3267
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY LAGOS
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 ACCRA 3169

LONDON FOR SEITZ

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PINS, SHUM, GH
SUBJ: GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON ARREST OF OPPOSITION LEADERS

REF: ACCRA 3006

1. SUMMARY: A GOG STATEMENT RELEASED APRIL 19 SAYS THAT
OPPOSITION LEADERS PLANNED TO INTERFERE WITH MARCH 30
REFERENDUM AND PLOTTED TO CREATE DISORDER IN GHANA. ACCORDING
TO STATEMENT, THIRTY-FIVE PLOTTERS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED AND
OTHERS ARE BEING SOUGHT. IN A RELATED DEVELOPMENT, LAWYERS
HAVE FILED WRITS OF HABEAS CORPUS SEEKING RELEASE OF AT
LEAST SEVEN DETAINEES. THERE IS A CHANCE THAT ALL OR SOME OF
THESE PRISONERS WILL BE FREED BY END OF APRIL, BUT THIS IS
NOT CERTAIN. END SUMMARY.

2. GOG STATEMENT EXPLAINING ARRESTS MAKES FOLLOWING POINTS:
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--BEFORE MARCH 30 REFERENDUM ON UNION GOVERNMENT,
GOG SECURITY FORCES LEARNED OF PLOT BY PEOPLES MOVE-
MENT FOR FREEDOM AND JUSTICE (PMFJ) AND OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS
TO INTERFERE WITH ELECTORAL PROCESS AND CREATE DISORDER
IF UNION GOVERNMENT WERE APPROVED BY REFERENDUM. THUGS
WERE RECRUITED AND TRAINED TO HANDLE GRENADES AND OTHER

WEAPONS. PLANS WERE MADE TO KIDNAP MEMBERS OF GOG AND THEIR FAMILIES OR FIRENDS. FIREARMS, CONCEALED IN A SACK, WERE DISCOVERED BY POLICE IN A TRO-TRO (PASSENGER TRUCK) NEAR WENCHI, BRONG-AHAFO REGION.

--A PRE-REFERENDUM SEARCH OF THE HOUSE OF A PMFJ COORDINATOR TURNED UP ILLICIT BALLOT PAPERS FOR BAWKU CONSTITUENCY. IN ANOTHER CASE, 185 REGISTRATION RECEIPTS WERE FOUND IN THE POSSESSION OF AN UNAUTHORIZED PERSON, WHO HAD BEEN GIVEN THEM BY A DOCTOR. COMMITTEES HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED TO FOMENT CIVIL DISORDER AND PARALYZE THE ECONOMY BY STRIKES AND DESTRUCTION OF SCARCE COMMODITIES. OTHER PERSONS WERE ASSIGNED TO WRITE AND DISTRIBUTE LITERATURE CALLING FOR AN UPRISING AGAINST GOG.

--IN ORDER NOT TO DISRUPT REFERENDUM, GOG AT FIRST TOOK NO ACTION. HOWEVER, "IN THE FACE OF THE THREAT TO PUBLIC ORDER AND THE OVERWHELMING EVIDENCE OF PREPARATIONS TO SUBVERT THE GOVERNMENT, THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO ORDER THE IMMEDIATE ARREST OF PERSONS KNOWN TO BE ASSOCIATED WITH THE PLOTS. THIRTY-FIVE PERSONS DIRECTLY LINKED WITH THE PLOTS HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. OTHERS ARE AT LARGE."

--CONCERNING HUMAN RIGHTS, GOG "WISHES TO ASSURE THE NATION, AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, THAT IT HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GREAT RESPECT FOR THE PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND WILL NOT ARREST ANYONE ON ACCOUNT OF HIS POLITICAL VIEWS...BUT RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS CANNOT BE CARRIED TO THE POINT OF A GOVERNMENT ABDICATING ITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF LAW AND ORDER AND THE PROTECTION OF THE LIFE AND PROPERTY OF THE CITIZENS." GOG WILL THUS TAKE "ALL APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO PREVENT A GROUP OF DISGRUNTLED POLITICIANS FROM THROWING THE COUNTRY INTO CHAOS. THE CASE OF EACH OF THE INDIVIDUALS ARRESTED IS BEING CRITICALLY EXAMINED AND APPROPRIATE DECISIONS WILL BE TAKEN IN DUE COURSE."

--GOG AFFIRMS ITS IRREVOCABLE COMMITMENT TO RETURNING GHANA TO CONSTITUTIONAL RULE AND ITS INTENTION OF PROCEEDING WITH ITS TIMETABLE (UNDER WHICH A CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT WOULD BE INSTALLED ON JULY 1, 1979.) IN A SPIRIT OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION, GOG CALLS ON ALL TO BURY DIFFERENCES AND UNITE TO ENSURE A PEACEFUL TRANSITION.

2. IN RELATED DEVELOPMENTS A SEKONDI HIGH COURT HAS GIVEN LAWYERS APPROVAL TO PROCEED WITH WRIT OF HABEAS CORPUS CHALLENGING ARREST AND DETENTION OF OPPOSITION LEADERS

K.A. GBEDEMA, B.J. DA ROCHA AND ISSAC KWESI WINNEY.

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LONDON FOR SEITZ

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, PINS, SHUM, GH
SUBJ: GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON ARREST OF OPPOSITION LEADERS

COURT WILL HEAR WRIT ON MAY 1. A HO HIGH COURT GRANTED
ANOTHER HABEAS CORPUS APPLICATION FILED BY LAWYERS ON
BEHALF OF FOUR OTHER OPPOSITION FIGURES, RAY KAKRABA-
QUARSHIE, T.D. BRODIE-MENDS, DR. J. BILSON AND K. OWUSU-
SEKYERE. THIS WRIT WILL BE HEARD APRIL 25.

3. COMMENT: GOG STATEMENT WAS DOUBTELESS PROMPTED BY
WIDESPREAD RUMORS ALLEGING HUNDREDS OF ARRESTS, ACCUSATORY
NEWSCASTS BY BBC, CRITICISM EXPRESSED BY AMNESTY INTER-
NATIONAL AND, LAST BUT NOT LEAST, INFORMAL DEMARCHES
ON HUMAN RIGHTS BY EMBOFFS TO POLITICAL AIDES OF HEAD OF
STATE ACHEAMPONG. (FOR EXAMPLE, WE POINTEDLY TOLD SPECIAL
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AIDE BEN KUMAH THAT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WOULD DAMAGE GHANA'S REPUTATION ABROAD AND MIGHT CONCEIVABLY AYNECT OUR ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS HERE.) WE FIND GOG STATEMENT RATHER THIN ON SPECIFIC EVIDENCE OF ALLEGED PLOTS TK DISRUPT GHANA, BUT IT IS POSSIBLE GOG HAS MORE PROOF BUT 2S WITHHOLDING DETAILS TO PROTECT UNDERCOVER SOURCES; STATEMENT SHOULD THEREFORE NOT BE DISMISSED OUT OF HAND. NEVERTHELESS, OPPONENTS OF ACHEAMPONG REGIME ARE NOT LIKELY TO ACCEPT IT.

4. WE UNDERSTAND THAT ALL OF THE 17 OPPOSITION LEADERS LISTED PARA 3 REFTEL ARE NOW UNDER ARREST. AMONG THOSE STILL BEING SOUGHT ARE JONES OFORI-ATTA, JOHNNY HANSEN, G.W. AMARTEFIO, A.A. AFRIFA, AND PROF. ADU-BOAHENE. WE DO NOT HAVE A LIST OF THE 35 PEOPLE REFERRED TO IN GOG STATEMENT. IN ANY CASE, STATEMENT WILL PERMIT GOG SUPPORTERS TO REFUTE SOME EXAGGERATED CLAIMS, SUCH AS ASSERTION IN APRIL 8 ECONOMIST THAT OVER 5,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE NOW BEING HELD HERE . (ECONOMIST ALSO CLAIMS IN THE SAME ARTICLE THAT MORE THAN 100 STUDENTS HAVE BEEN KILLED BY SOLDIERS SINCE JANUARY 1978 IN UNIVERSITY RIOTS. THIS IS NONSENSE; EVEN THE MOST DRAMATIC RUMORS HERE--LATER OFFICIALLY DENIED--SPOKE ONLY OF TWO STUDENT DEATHS DURING DEMONSTRATIONS AT UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN KUMASI).

5. WE THINK ODDS ARE ABOUT EVEN THAT IF GHANA REMAINS RELATIVELY CALM, ACHEAMPONG WILL RELEASE ALL OR MOST POLITICAL DETAINEES BY END OF APRIL. GOG TIMETABLE CALLS FOR APPOINTMENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL COMMISSION IN LAST WEEK OF APRIL TO DRAFT CONSTITUTION. THIS WOULD BE AN AUSPICIOUS TIME FOR ACHEAMPONG TO ACT OUT THEME OF RECONCILIATION IN GOG STATEMENT BY ERASING ALLEGED OFFENSES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND GIVING OPPONENTS A FRESH CHANCE. HOWEVER, THIS HAPPY OUTCOME IS FAR FROM CERTAIN AND DETAINEES MAY STAY IN JAIL SOME TIME LONGER.
SMITH

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